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STATE FOR AF/SPG, PRM, AND ALSO PASS USAID/W  
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SUBJECT: SOUTHERN SUDAN - FOOD SECURITY ASSESSMENT

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SUMMARY  
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(U) From February 26 to March 10, a joint USAID and Government of Southern Sudan (GOSS) team traveled to two states in Southern Sudan, Central Equatoria and Northern Bahr el Ghazal, to assess the food security sector and make recommendations for USAID's transition from relief assistance to development assistance. The team's findings will be used to develop a food security strategy that will help USAID/Sudan manage the transition to long-term assistance as short-term humanitarian resources are reduced. It is anticipated that humanitarian resources will be reduced in phases, as is already happening in Southern Sudan, which is in the third year of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). The USAID team identified markets and roads, the role of government, expanded commerce, skills and training, water, returnees, reliance on non-governmental organizations (NGOs), appropriate farming technology, nutrition, seeds, and agriculture and pest control as priority issues. End Summary.

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BACKGROUND  
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1. (U) During the civil war, USAID's humanitarian programs in Southern Sudan supported essential services in the vast rural areas where most internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees originated. USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) and USAID's Office of Food for Peace (USAID/FFP) provided considerable assistance in the food security sector, including food aid, agriculture activities, livestock programs, and rural livelihood development projects. The CPA has created a more favorable environment for development assistance, especially by establishing the new government structures in Southern Sudan and improving security. New long-term resource flows have begun from GOSS, other international mechanisms such as the Multi-Donor Trust Funds, and the private sector. Humanitarian assistance at wartime levels is no longer needed. Achieving food security is now realistic in Southern Sudan, southern Blue Nile State, the Nuba Mountains, and Abyei. (Comment: One of the important results of the CPA has been the sharing of oil revenues. The inflow of money to the GOSS and the Southern Sudan state governments is running at more than USD 1 billion per year, providing an opportunity for government services to be established. In addition, some of the oil companies

have undertaken community development projects that have had a positive impact on food security. End Comment.)

12. (U) The team held discussions with GOSS and state governments, reviewed existing USAID humanitarian food security programs, as well as other donor-funded activities. USAID is developing a food security strategy that will eventually cover the entire country of Sudan, including Darfur, the Three Areas, eastern Sudan, and Southern Sudan.

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SUMMARY OF FINDINGS  
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13. (U) The USAID team identified the following needs during the food security assessment.

--MARKETS AND ROADS: Most rural households grow crops for consumption, not for markets. A major constraint to greater agricultural production and rural income is lack of access to markets. FeedUi3Z9l--ROLE OF GOVERNMENT: The GOSS and state governments have not yet established the foundation for development. County government departments are critical for successful rural income programs. Currently, county governments lack the capacity to implement policies, monitor activities, and coordinate NGOs, which are currently the main service providers. At the time of the team's visit, county officials had no salaries, transportation, equipment, and in some cases no offices. Benefits from donor investments in rural income cannot be sustained and maximized without full government participation.

--EXPANDED COMMERCE: Many new post-conflict dynamics influence prospects for commerce and economic growth. New road construction is connecting previously disconnected locations and markets,

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shortening travel time and distance, and changing trade patterns and price relationships. The range and quantity of trade has expanded with Uganda, Kenya, and northern Sudan. For example, Central Equatoria State has booming markets in Juba and Yei, but almost all fruits, vegetables, and food sold in these markets are from Uganda. For now, Southern Sudan remains a net importer of food.

--SKILLS AND TRAINING: Most skills and services in Southern Sudan are being supplied by non-Sudanese. People need skills and training to increase their income through agricultural production or employment. Excellent work in agricultural training and extension is being done by NGOs through decentralized farmer training centers. Vocational training is needed to meet the rapidly growing demand for new services, such as auto mechanics and electricians. Shifting from free to sustainable cost recovery for training and extension will reveal the true demand for these NGO services.

--WATER: Although not a focus of the assessment, the team saw that inadequate and distant water supplies for both people and cattle are a major constraint to rural stability, resettlement, and productive activities. Water is crucial to food security, nutrition, hygiene, and health. Long hours collecting water keeps women from other productive activities and increases infant malnutrition. Scarcity of water has often led to conflict and slows IDP and refugee returns.

--RETURNEES: Approximately 750,000 refugees and IDPs returned to Southern Sudan in 2005 and 2006, following the signing of the CPA. The Government of National Unity (GNU), GOSS, and UN agencies have agreed to assist as many as 300,000 people to return in 2007. Another 300,000 people are expected to return spontaneously before the end of the year, with perhaps 100,000 arriving before the rainy season starts in May or June. Northern Bahr el Ghazal State is planning to assist 300,000 IDPs to return this year, a figure now thought unlikely. While returnees are eligible for three months of food rations from the UN World Food Program (WFP), most rely on temporary support from their kin. Southern Sudan is poorly prepared to meet the additional water, education, and health care needs of returnees. From a food security perspective, returnees and host

communities are considered among the most vulnerable groups.

--RELIANCE ON NGOS: Southern Sudan will continue to need the support of NGOs, donors, and other international agencies for some time before the state and local governments can assume complete financial and management responsibility for service delivery. The challenge now is to build the capacity and budgetary independence of state and local governments so they can eventually take the lead in these service sectors.

--APPROPRIATE FARMING TECHNOLOGY: Most farmers now plant and cultivate by hand with hoes, limiting cultivation to less than 1.5 acres. Using ox plows, agricultural production can be increased by 3 to 4 times, and returnees can quickly become self-sufficient and earn money. A number of NGOs are training oxen and farmers and selling ox plows. Irrigation pumps can boost production of high-value cash crops during the dry season when prices are high. Selling, repairing, and maintaining equipment should be done by the private sector to ensure sustainability.

--NUTRITION: Malnutrition rates among children are still above the emergency threshold, and have not improved since the CPA. The association between malnutrition, food availability, and socioeconomic status is weak. Poor child feeding practices, morbidity, and factors underlying morbidity, including distant and unsafe water sources, delayed and inadequate health care, and poor personal and environmental hygiene, have stronger links to malnutrition than food availability or access. Nutrition interventions are more effective when supported by national systems for nutrition education and surveillance. National or regional systems are not yet fully in place in Southern Sudan.

--SEEDS: During the civil war, NGOs and the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) provided most seeds, often with doubtful certification and poor quality. At the time of this assessment, FAO, NGOs, and GOSS were in the process of buying and transporting seeds for distribution to returnees in Southern Sudan. The GOSS will soon establish a policy and infrastructure for seed testing, certifying, and import control at borders. Seed supply should eventually be managed by the private sector.

--AGRICULTURE AND PEST CONTROL: Post-harvest crop losses in Southern Sudan are very high, with a negative impact on food security. Local traditional means of pest control combined with

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integrated pest management can reduce losses substantially. GOSS is establishing a program to do this that will need support to reach rural areas.

POWERS